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INFLUENCE OPERATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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06 October 2006

Abstract

Influence Operations in Afghanistan

American and NATO forces are now engaged in what can be described as Influence Operations in Afghanistan. This paper demonstrates that in order to be effective, these Influence Operations must be tailored for each individual province and uniquely focused to account for how ethnic composition, geography, economic and agricultural factors affect the thoughts, actions and behavior of the population in each province.

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INTRODUCTION

The mission of United States Forces in Afghanistan has transitioned into a mixture of nation building, enabling civil authority, shaping and Information Operations. Joint Publication 3-13 describes Information Operations as “the integrated employment of electronic warfare (EW), computer network operations (CNO), psychological operations (PSYOP), military deception (MILDEC), and operations security (OPSEC), in concert with specific supporting and related capabilities, to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp adversarial human and automated decision making while protecting our own”. Neither of these terms individually (nation building, enabling civil authority, shaping or Information Operations) sufficiently encompass the present mission of U.S. and NATO Forces in Afghanistan. One term does adequately describe the present mission. To boil it down, the U.S. and NATO mission in Afghanistan can be described as successfully employing “Influence Operations” to shape the environment such that havens for global terrorist organizations will not be tolerated by governments or their constituents in the region. This is a mission aimed at influencing and molding the Afghani population’s support for a strong central government and changing their opinions of the United States from negative or neutral to positive or supportive. Upon accomplishment of this mission, the threat of attack on U.S. citizens around the world by radicalized Muslim extremist groups operating from the Afghan region will be dramatically reduced.

In the case of Afghanistan, we are trying to influence popular values and impressions, develop an atmosphere supportive of a strong central government and marginalizing the influence of radical religious groups who either engage in or support attacks on central government figures or the forces in country providing support to that government.

A general Influence Operations Plan will not be sufficient to ensure successful achievement of the mission. The diversity in demographics throughout Afghanistan, along with the economic, agricultural and geographic conditions that vary throughout the country dictate that Influence Operations be tailored to specific provinces.

DETERMINING FACTORS IN INFLUENCE OPERATIONS

In order to significantly influence popular sentiment (either by actions or communication), you have to understand the thought process and motivations of the individuals that make up the population group. In order to understand the group's thought process, you have to have an understanding of that group's background. In Afghanistan, the major factors that affect the behavior of Afghanis are ethnicity, geographic makeup of his home territory, level and quality of education and religious affiliation. These factors determine individual values, how groups respond to conflict, who influential decision makers are, who they trust, how resolute or tenacious a group is and how open to change a group is. Any Influence Operation must take these factors into account in order to be effective.

Ethnicity

Ethnic groups that inhabit Afghanistan include Pashtun, Tajik, Hazaras, Uzbek, Turkmen, Farsiwans (Persians), Baluchis, Aimags, Nuristanis, Afridis and Kirgiz. Many of these ethnic groups are concentrated in specific geographic regions within Afghanistan. Behavioral patterns, values and motivations vary between these different ethnic groups. Past conflicts between some of these groups affect present day interactions and perceptions between certain ethnic groups. A keen understanding of each ethnic group within a province

as well as how each group perceives and interacts with other groups is pertinent to developing an effective Influence Operations plan.

Pashtun

The Pashtun are the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan comprising of about 42% of the total population.¹ They are primarily located in the East and South of the country and extend into neighboring Pakistan. (See Figure 1.)












Pashtuns are primarily Sunni Muslims who follow the Hanafi school of law. “Hanafi jurisprudence recognizes consensus, analogy, and private opinion in the adjudication of laws.”² Being Hanafi Sunnis, while *mullahs* remain the recognized religious scholars, the Sufi Shayks³ have a great deal of influence in tribal matters. Pashtuns are composed of at least seven different tribal groups; Durrani, Ghilzai, Jaji, Mangal, Safi, Mamund and Mohmand. They are mainly farmers and herdmen and as a group, are ranked highest among all ethnic populations in terms of social stature.

¹ *CIA World Factbook*

² Hafizullah Emadi, *Culture and Customs of Afghanistan*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2005) p.56

³ Wikipedia defines: A **Shaykh of Sufism** is a [Sufi](#) (a mystic tradition of Islam) who is authorized to teach, initiate and guide aspiring [dervishes](#). The word **Dervish**, especially in [European languages](#), refers to members of [Sufi Muslim ascetic](#) religious [fraternities](#), known for their extreme poverty and austerity, similar to [mendicant friars](#).



KEY		Pashun		Kyrgyz
		Taiik		Turkmen
		Hazara		Nuristani
		Uzbek		Pamiri
		Aimak		Other
		Baluchi		

Source: NationalGeographic.com

Figure 1
Afghan Ethnic Map

The Pashtun culture is predicated on a moral code (Pushtunwali) that determines social order and responsibilities. Pushtunwali contains sets of values that pertain to honor

(*namus*), solidarity (*nang*), hospitality and others. Defense of honor (*namus*) is obligatory for every Pashtun even unto death. Robert D. Kaplan, in his book *Soldiers of God* notes the supreme precept of Pushtunwali is *badal*- revenge.⁴ Understanding how this code of honor affects the daily behavior and decision making process of the Pashtuns is critical to any operation aimed at gaining influence. The U.S. Army's Area Handbook Series on Afghanistan further describes *namus* under Pushtunwali:

A man's *namus* is expressed through his ability to dominate and defend his property, including his household and his wife and female relatives. A Pashtun who has suffered a blow to his honor is expected to seek revenge in the form of physical retaliation or compensation in property or money. Such a code of behavior is often in opposition to strict interpretation of sharia. When a conflict occurs, Pashtuns tend to "do Pashtun" instead of following Sunna, believing as they do that Muslim and Pashtun are equivalent.⁵

Communists failed to understand Pushtunwali and how it would affect the actions of the Pashtuns when they (the Communists) attempted to nationalize wealth and land ownership and change social structure, particularly the role of women in society.

An understanding of Pushtunwali is also very important to understanding how the Taliban movement, whose origins were in Pashtun areas, gained popular support or acceptance by the population.

By 1994, Afghanistan had disintegrated into general area of factional infighting among warlords following the departure of the Soviet Union in 1989. Ahmid Rashid describes the situation and warring groups in his book *Taliban* :

Their leaders sold off everything to Pakistani traders to make money, stripping down telephone wires and poles, cutting trees, selling off factories, machinery and even road rollers to scrap merchants. The warlords seized homes and farms, threw out their occupants and handed them over to their supporters. The commanders abused the population at will,

⁴ Robert D. Kaplan, *Soldiers of God*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1990) p. 41

⁵ *Afghanistan, a Country Study*, (Department of the Army Area Handbook Series, 1986) p.108

kidnapping young girls and boys for their sexual pleasure, robbing merchants in the bazaars and fighting and brawling in the streets.⁶

To groups of former *mujahadin* commanders, including Mullah Modhammed Omar, the situation was untenable. This prompted meetings and discussions among various groups of *mujahadin* in Pashtun areas, culminating in the movement now recognized as the Taliban. Their stated agenda aimed to “restore peace, disarm the population, enforce Sharia law and defend the integrity and Islamic character of Afghanistan”.⁷ The Taliban (from the word *talib*, which means one who seeks knowledge, *taliban* being plural) saw themselves as “the cleansers and purifiers of a guerilla war gone astray, a social system gone wrong and an Islamic way of life that had been compromised by corruption and excess”.⁸

In order to bolster popular support of the existing central government and reject the presence of religious extremist (in the form of Taliban groups) in Pashtun areas, Influence Operations must focus on actions that appeal to Pashtun values of honor. Elimination of government corruption must be effective and visible to the Pashtun. In order to gain influence in the region, a group must show conviction in protecting order while respecting the tenets of Islam. Gaining credibility among the Sufi Shayks is also a key factor in gaining influence in the region. Sufi Shaykhs, in general, have a reputation of men of peace whose interest in God makes them disinterested in mundane conflicts- in contrast to mullahs who, as purveyors of learning, often involve themselves in escalating conflicts into Islamic ones.⁹

The Ghilzai Pashtun “conceive of tribal membership as synonymous with membership in the

⁶ Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban*, (New Haven: Yale Nota Bene, 2001) p. 21

⁷ Ibid, p. 22

⁸ Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban*, (New Haven: Yale Nota Bene, 2001) p. 23

⁹ *Afghanistan, a Country Study*, (Department of the Army Area Handbook Series, 1986) p. 100

Muslim community. Therefore, tribal solidarity is equated with the solidarity of the *umma*¹⁰, and Ghilzai perceive anything that threatens tribal solidarity as evil and associated with the devil”.¹¹

Influence Operations must draw on Pushtunwali to expose radical Islamists who exploit religion in efforts to manipulate impressionable individuals in pursuit of political goals. This will prove to be the most effective means of defeating Taliban influence in Pashtun regions.

Tajik

Tajiks comprise the second largest ethnic group in Afghanistan contributing to 25% of the total population. They are mainly Sunni but some are Ismaili Shia, particularly in the north. Some Sunni do not consider Ismaili Shia true Muslims (as opposed to Imami Shias). Tajiks congregate the northern region of the country. This comprises of the Panjsher valley north of Kabul. These are the northeastern provinces of Parvan, Takhar, Badakshan, Baghlan and Samangan. (See Figure 2.)

Tajiks are predominantly sedentary mountaineer farmers and herders but are also well represented in the upper middle class in Kabul. They prefer to refer to themselves by the name of the valley or region they inhabit instead of being organized by tribe.

¹⁰ Denotation for the community of [Muslims](#), that is, the totality of all Muslims

¹¹ Ibid p. 100



Figure 2
AFGHAN PROVINCES

Hazaras

Hazaras make up 18% of the total population in Afghanistan. They are mainly in the central region in the rugged mountainous core of the country. (See Figure 2.) They are mainly Imami Shia but some follow the Sunni and Ismaili Shia practices of Islam.

Hazaras rank very low in ethnic status and in Kabul they “tend to follow the same unskilled labor occupations, so that some jobs have come to be known as Hazara occupations”.¹²

Among the Hazaras, generosity is highly valued. Men usually build their reputations on their generosity. This implies that having a good job is highly valued which provides the income from which generosity can be exercised. Good government jobs are particularly highly valued.

Hazaras have good reason to prefer a solid central government void of Taliban influences. Although the Koran demands brotherhood between all Muslims, the Taliban exhibited little tolerance toward non-Sunni Islamic sects. During the Taliban reign, the Taliban executed between 2000 and 5000 civilians, predominantly Shi’ite Muslims in 1998. According to Amalendu Misra, in his book *Afghanistan*, “Shi’ite Hazaras who survived this onslaught were told by the Taliban ‘either to adopt Sunni Muslim rituals, pay a special tax as non-Muslims, face death or emigrate to their spiritual homeland, Iran’”.¹³

With these basic facts about the Hazaras, you begin to get a picture of how to shape Influence Operations aimed at the Hazara population. Education would play a big part in gaining influence. Providing a means for more Hazaras to attend school and selling this as a means of improving employment opportunities, particularly better paying jobs with higher prestige, would be an effective way of using education to gain influence in the Hazara community. The constant presence of government police and National Army forces are important in instilling confidence in the government’s ability to preserve order and protect the Hazara population. Industrialization would also prove effective in gaining influence.

¹² *Afghanistan, a Country Study*, (Department of the Army Area Handbook Series, 1986) p.110

¹³ Amalendu Misra, *Afghanistan*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004) p. 78

Greater industrialization provides increased opportunities for technical jobs, in turn providing an escape from traditional urban ‘Hazara occupations’. Funds spent on projects bringing industry to Hazara dominated areas would provide a great return on investment in gaining influence over the population.

Uzbek

Uzbeks comprise just over 6% of the population. They are mainly Sunni Muslim and inhabit the north central regions from Faryab Province to Badakhshan. (See Figure 2.) They are sedentary farmers and herders but also noted as being astute businessmen and skilled artisans.

Among Uzbeks, marriage is the most important expression of ethnicity. They prefer to marry their own people.

Among the Influence Operations aimed at Uzbeks that would prove most beneficial are those that focus on improving the business opportunities for these unique artisans and business owners. This means improved roads for transporting goods and providing improved centers for commerce. Building commerce centers (with water and electricity) from which to market goods, would provide substantial opportunity for improvement in the standard of living for many Hazaras and serve as very visible and effective means of instilling trust in the government and swaying popular sentiment as far as the role U.S. forces play in Afghanistan.

Turkmen

Turkmen are Sunnis who comprise only about 2.5% of the population and inhabit the north central region of the country. As with most of the ethnic groups in Afghanistan, Turkmen are a patrilineal society. In Afghanistan, bride-price is the transfer of a sum of

money and/or property from the groom's family to the bride's family in order to obtain sole rights to the brides economic, sexual or reproductive services. Turkmen brides require the largest bride-price which reflects the high value they place on female labor in carpet production where a wife has a skill of direct cash value.

This is an area to focus Influence Operations on. Industrializing the carpet production industry would improve the earning potential of families in the carpet market by improving production efficiency. However, these industrialization attempts must be sensitive to and avoid replacing human labor. Any industrialization projects that are seen as stealing available jobs for women in the industry would most assuredly meet fierce resistance and failure. Any industrialization projects in the carpet industry must be focused on easing the workload and improving conditions for the average individual in the carpet making trade.

Geography

Although Afghanistan is roughly the size of Texas, its geography varies greatly from the fertile northern plains, to the steep central mountain region, to the southern plateau. As Afghanistan is not a technically advanced country, these variations in geography affect transportation, economic livelihood, standard of living and municipal infrastructure more than that of a technically advanced country.

The Hind-Kush mountain range splits Afghanistan between the fertile northern plains and the arid plains of the southern plateau. As a result, the limited road network basically consists of a road that surrounds the mountain range and connects the major cities. Ring road, as it is referred to, connects Kabul, Ghazni, Kandahar, Herat, and Mazar-e-sharif. There are very few paved roads throughout the rest of this very rugged terrain. A prominent railroad

network does not exist within the country. As a consequence, transportation is slow and laborious, slowing trade and commerce.

There are four types of land ownership in Afghanistan: private ownership, joint ownership, religious ownership, and public ownership. Only about 22% of the country is arable. As a result, landownership carries significant influence in civil affairs. Hafizullah Emadi explains how land ownership affects politics in Afghanistan:

Landowners commonly influence rural politics in two ways: through their own economic positions and through their connections with conservative clerics, *mullahs*, who make up a large part of the “rural elite.” Their influence can be used to obstruct the efforts of local government officials and to conduct activities such as tax collection, census taking, and recruitment in the army. Thus, in most cases, great efforts are made by the government to secure the cooperation of the largest landowners, most of whom are also tribal chiefs.¹⁴

Opium remains a major source of income for Afghans. UN officials estimated that in 2005, opium production constituted 50% of Afghanistan legitimate GNP.¹⁵ In 2005 the total area under opium poppy cultivation was equal to 2.3% of Afghanistan’s arable land.¹⁶ In fact, surveys conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Afghan Ministry of Counternarcotics (MCN) estimated that in 2005, the number of people cultivating opium poppy crops made up 8.7% of the entire population.¹⁷

The pertinent point here is that landowners are significant decision makers in Afghan culture and opium poppy cultivation is a major source of income for many landowners. Any operations taken to influence decision makers must take this into account. Income from a hectare¹⁸ of poppies can reach \$4,600 a year, while a hectare of wheat can bring only \$390.¹⁹

¹⁴ Hafizullah Emadi, *Culture and Customs of Afghanistan*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2005) p. 22

¹⁵ Christopher M. Blanchard, *Afghanistan: Narcotics and U.S. Policy*, Congressional Research Report for Congress, January 25, 2006.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. CRS-2

¹⁷ Ibid, p. CRS-3

¹⁸ A Hectare being 10,000 square meters. Roughly, two football fields laid side by side.

¹⁹ Paul Gallis, *NATO in Afghanistan: A Test of the Transatlantic Alliance*, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, p. CRS-5.

This is in a country where (according to the CIA World Fact Book) the 2004 Gross Domestic Product per capita was \$800.

Any agricultural reform efforts which have as its basis forcing or convincing farmers to cultivate wheat or other grains versus opium poppy will certainly have little chance of success. Any drug eradication efforts must focus on removing the financial incentives in cultivating opium poppy over other crops.

Municipal infrastructure affects Influence Operations greatly. Only a small percentage of the population has access to electricity and those that do are mainly in urban areas. In the case of urban areas that do have electricity, it is neither continuous nor consistent.

While there are 44 radio broadcast stations in Afghanistan, the lack of available electricity and steep mountain terrain in the central and northeastern regions limit the proportion of the population that receive radio signals. Short wave radio is preferred over AM or FM frequencies. As a result, traditional AM/FM radio broadcasts should not be the core of Influence Operations in Afghanistan. Rather, they can be used in addition to shortwave radio broadcasts to supplement the main visible actions which make up Influence Operations in each region. Radio broadcasts should be used to advertise the construction projects completed in each province and to inform the population of how their government is providing opportunities to improve their daily lives.

Television access is even sparser with only 9 out of 34 provinces having a television broadcast station.²⁰

²⁰ *CIA World Factbook*

Telephone service is very limited but wireless telephone service is improving with four wireless telephone service providers being licensed last year. Approximately 3 out of every 10 Afghans have a wireless telephone.²¹

Education

The literacy rate overall in Afghanistan is 36% according to the CIA World Factbook. This is further broken down by sex to: male 51%, female 21%. School attendance along with literacy rates vary among provinces and therefore, Influence Operations must be especially sensitive to these figures.

Education will prove to be the key to countering influence by radical Islamic groups. As Robert D. Kaplan states in *Soldiers of God*, “conspiracy theories are inflamed by illiteracy”.²²

It is through education that the population will enable themselves to take full advantage of industrialization projects started in their region. Improving literacy rates will improve the effectiveness of using printed media to pass information from the government to the population. More importantly, it will improve the agricultural capabilities of farmers as they become better able to understand and utilize modern farming practices and machines. A solid educational background in Afghan history will bring to light the tradition of Afghan religious tolerance; a religious tolerance that was clouded during the reign of the Soviet Communists and then the Taliban.

²¹ CIA World Factbook

²² Robert D. Kaplan, *Soldiers of God*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1990) p. 243

INDIVIDUAL PROVINCIAL STUDIES

The following are three individual provincial case studies that breakdown the factors the affect Influence Operations in that province and examples of projects that capitalize on these factors.

Paktika Province

Paktika Province lies in the southeast portion of Afghanistan and borders the Pakistan border. It is a mountainous region with Sharan serving as the major city. It encompasses 7,522 sq. miles and its population numbers about 250,000 persons. Its inhabitants are mainly Pashtun. The literacy rates for males (33%) and females (15%) are lower than the Afghan average. Almost 40% of male children between the ages of 7 and 14 do not attend school and over 90% of female children in that age group do not attend school. Almost a quarter of the households do not have a radio. Drinking water is at a premium. Electricity and running water are scarce. The main agricultural products are wheat, fruits, potatoes and almonds. The percentage of population unable to meet basic food needs in 2004 was 60%.²³

Opium poppy cultivation in Paktika province is negligible. (See Figure 3.)

Considering these background conditions, Influence Operations in Paktika Province must concentrate on improving quality of life, education, and drawing on the precepts of Pushtunwali. Visible construction projects are key factors in Influence Operations. Providing visible symbols of Afghan commitment to improving the welfare of its people will serve to build support for the central government. These structures must be solidly built and have water and sewer facilities along with sufficient lighting. These may seem rudimentary on the surface, but they are critical factors that cannot be overlooked in a land where construction

²³ These figures are from the *CIA World Factbook*.

contractors have little experience and flexible standards. A poorly constructed school built ‘on the cheap’ would actually have a negative affect on public support for the government.

You can expect Taliban forces to target these structures for demolition in response to efforts to educate the population (especially women) and show that the government is unable to protect the general population. If the Pashtun have developed a sense of ownership and pride in these structures, destructive actions by the Taliban would work against them as destruction of these structures would induce strong indignation in the eyes of the Pashtun. The Taliban need, if not the direct support, at least the acceptance of the Pashtun in order to operate in Pashtun areas. Offending the Pushtunwali would activate the most effective forces in ousting Taliban presence in eastern Afghanistan.

So, key to deterring Taliban influence in the Paktika Province are effective Influence Operations that tie Pashtun pride to government construction projects within the province. How do you do this? I argue that including influential Pahstuns in the design of these structures is key. Not just the district leaders, but the influential landowners as well. Schools should be built as part of a larger structure serving the community. Including a ‘community center’ in the structure, as a place where the Pashtun population can meet, trade goods and information, plan further municipal projects, etc., would develop a sense of Pashtun ownership in the structure. This would also serve as an excellent base from which to distribute print media and promulgate government information. Including lights to the exterior would also extend the effectiveness of the facility as it would not be restricted to use during daylight hours. Although electricity might not be available in these areas, solar street lights (available on the commercial market) and would serve perfectly well in these locations such as this.

Expanding these structures to include meeting centers and newspaper stands instead of merely serving as a school, means a larger construction project which translates to more workmen hired for labor which translates to more money infused into the local economy and more construction experience gained by the local population. Tying schools to print media outlets via a common physical structure (i.e. 'community center') implies to the population 'with education comes information'. With Pashtun pride invested into the project, any destructive elements in the area (i.e. Taliban) are more likely to be identified if attacks are made on these centers. What must be also shown however, is a commitment to keep these structures functioning in the face of Taliban attempts to destroy these facilities. Quickly funding and executing reconstruction of damaged facilities will serve to show government's commitment to the welfare of its population.

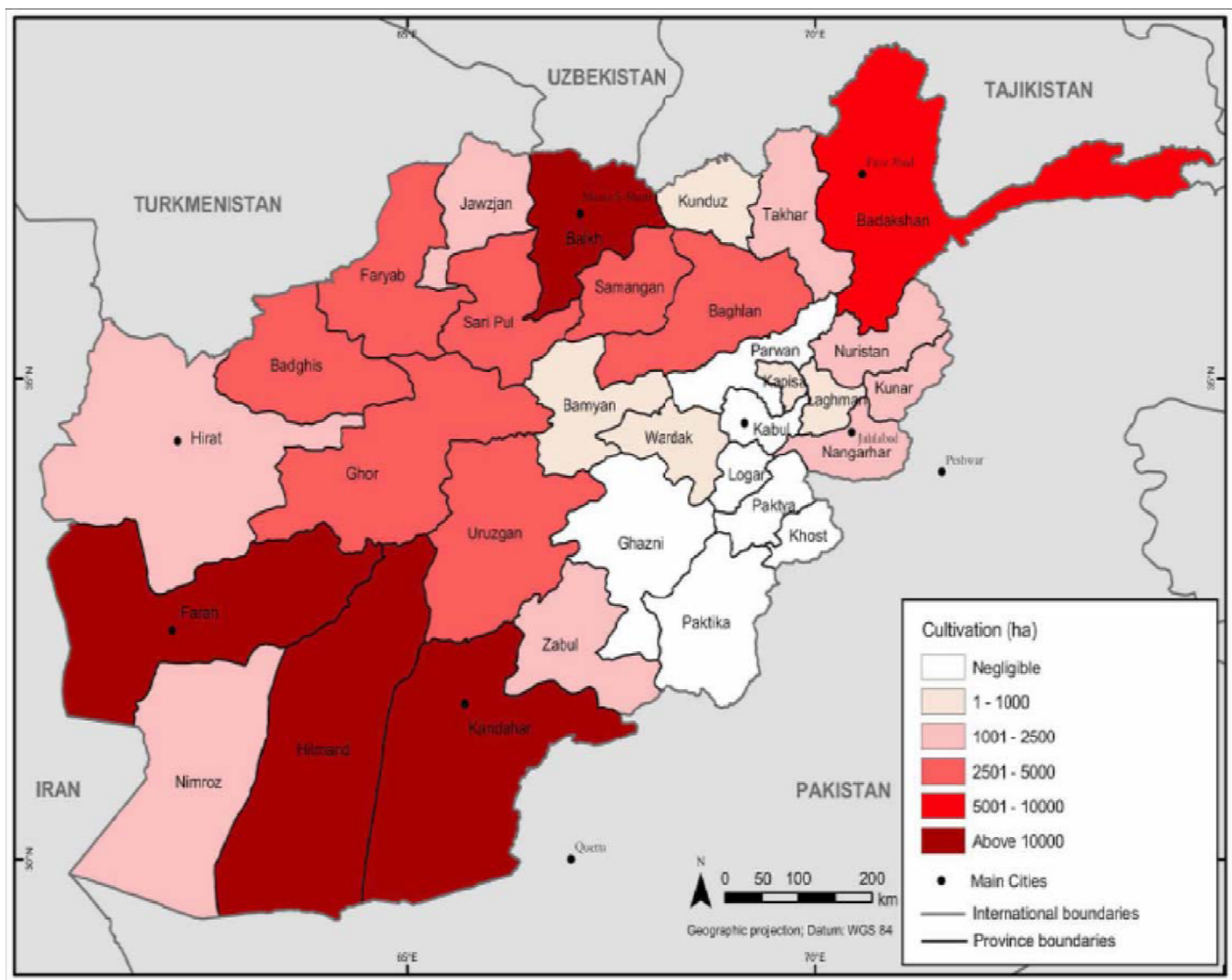


Figure 3
Opium Poppy Cultivation by Province, 2005

Uruzgan Province

Uruzgan Province lies in the southern center of Afghanistan. The landscape is characterized by dry steppe and infertile soil. This country province is an even harsher environment than Paktika Province. Drought conditions have further strained living conditions. According to the DIA website 84% of the water in Uruzgan Province is unsafe to drink. Over 37% of households do not even have access to radio media. Literacy rates are

lower than in Paktika. Only 19.8% of the population is literate in Uruzgan Province (32.5% of males and 5.4% of females). This province is predominantly Pashtun but there is a significant Hazara population (Shia Muslims) in the area as well. Uruzgan Province is also an Opium Poppy cultivating province, unlike Paktika (see Figure 3).

Comparing conditions in Paktika and Uruzgan Province, three items immediately stand out with regard to how Influence Operations would differ in these two provinces. These items are: the ethnic/religious makeup of the inhabitants, drought and water conditions, and the presence of Opium Poppy cultivation. Literacy rates in Uruzgan Province are markedly lower than Paktika but in either province, literacy rates are so low that information passed via printed means would have limited effectiveness.

Operations to increase the amount and availability of safe drinking water in this province would pay high dividends. Coalition Force assistance with civil water treatment projects would be very influential in improving the impression of the role of foreign forces in Afghanistan.

The Hazara segment of the population in Uruzgan Province is sure to have significant reservations about the return of Taliban forces to power in the region. Influence Operations should capitalize on these fears. The Hazara will serve as a potent intelligence resource regarding Taliban influences in the region. In order to ensure the open flow of intelligence from the Hazaras, adequate physical protection must be provided and sustained. Sustained physical presence of police and Afghan National Army forces in Hazara regions would serve more effectively in developing open communications with and positive support for Afghan government entities. Sacrificing some security presence in Pashtun areas of Uruzgan Province to increase presence in Hazara areas would provide greater return on investment as

Pashtun areas would probably not as likely be targets of Taliban retribution for provincial cooperation with government and foreign forces.

The presence of opium poppy cultivation and stated efforts by the Afghan Government (with pressure from foreign states) to eradicate opium production create a tenuous situation in this province. Efforts to eradicate poppy fields without providing alternative sources of income will most assuredly undermine support for the government and allied forces in the region. Taliban forces would then be open to exploit this dissatisfaction by encouraging support for their movement in return for protection of their poppy fields. By support I mean, material support in the form of supplies, food, weapons, monetary support, intelligence support etc. Before eradicating poppy fields, alternative means of income must be established. What will be a challenge is developing alternate sources of income that come close to matching in the income level that opium poppy provides. This will require some industrialization, which requires development of municipal infrastructure which in turn requires time. What this boils down to is that poppy field eradication efforts should take a back seat to industrialization in this region. This will require time and requisite dedication of effort but as the desert oasis' of Las Vegas, Phoenix and Tucson demonstrate, can be enormously successful.

Kunar Province

Kunar province lies east of the Hindu Kush mountain range and is characterized geologically by highlands and some forest in the eastern areas. Mild to warm temperatures with sufficient presence of water and human population has provided conditions in which malaria has festered. Literacy rates, ethnic and religious makeup, safe drinking water and percentages of households with access to radio are similar to those of Paktika Province. Two

major differences in conditions (that are pertinent to Influence Operations) that exist between the two provinces are the existence of malaria and the cultivation of opium poppy in Kunar Province.

In Kunar Province, concentrated efforts in reducing the susceptibility and affects of malaria in the region will serve as visible, positive contributions by U.S. and NATO forces in the eyes of the population. This is where the presence of foreign forces can be seen as beneficial to the local population. This is where the government can gain support from its citizens. And notably, this is an area that can be used to undermine the support of Taliban forces in the area. Notable attention must be given to the fact that Americans are improving the health of the individual Pashtun as opposed to the Taliban who provide no such support. Once campaigns are in place to combat malaria in the province, ample publicity must be given to the fact that foreign forces are helping the Afghan Government make a positive and measured improvement to the quality of life for its citizens in this region.

The same approach to poppy fields should be taken here as what was argued for in Uruzgan Province. Eradication of poppy fields should take place after sufficient alternate means of income are established for poppy farmers. As Kunar Province has a climate more conducive to agricultural projects, these would be a preferred means of creating alternate means of income for farmers. As mentioned earlier, poppy fields draw much higher income per hectare than other products. In order to make alternate crops advantageous, the tools that improve farming efficiency in the west (i.e. industrial farming equipment, advanced agriculture methods) must be carried over to Kunar Province.

CONCLUSIONS

Effective Influence Operations in Afghanistan will be those which are specifically tailored for individual provinces and take into account the differences in ethnic population, regional geography, economic factors and agricultural conditions; all of which are determining factors in how the population in a province thinks, acts and behave.

Conventional Information Operations involving dropped leaflets, radio broadcasts, television messages and printed media are much less effective (by themselves) in influencing the average Afghan. Here in Afghanistan, actions speak louder than words and it is by visible actions that U.S. and NATO efforts to stabilize the region, will be successful. Conventional Information Operations (radio, newspaper, television) may be a major force in future decades when Afghanistan has enjoyed modernization and globalization but for now, they play secondary and supportive roles to the visible construction and industrialization projects that are most effective at strengthening the Afghan government, infrastructure and economy. This in turn will result in improved security and a shield against the influence of terrorist organizations in the region.

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